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ABSTRACT

The reading program described in this lesson plan uses traditional stories of the Native peoples (narrative text) to introduce students to the study of animals in Alaska (expository text). During three 45-minute lessons, students will: complete a KWLQ (Know; Want to Know; Learn; Question) chart; listen and respond to a story (narrative text) by participating in a class discussion; access a website about the animal in the story to gather facts (expository text); write a report; and compare and contrast narrative and expository text. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. (PM)

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Alaska Native Stories: Using Narrative to Introduce Expository Text

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Grade Band
3-5

Estimated Lesson Time
Three 45-minute periods

Overview

This lesson uses traditional stories of the Native peoples (i.e., narrative text) to introduce students to the study of animals in Alaska (i.e., expository text). Students use the Internet to listen to a Yu'pik tale told by John Active, a Native person living in Alaska. They also use online resources to find facts about animals in Alaska. Students compare and contrast the two types of text in terms of fiction and nonfiction. The narrative stories provide students with a context to begin studying a content area topic, and thus, this lesson emphasizes the integration of curriculum.

From Theory to Practice

Moss, B. (1991). Children's nonfiction trade books: A complement to content area texts. *The Reading Teacher, 45,* 26–32.

In this article, the author identifies the limitations of content area textbooks and the advantages of nonfiction trade books. She also provides criteria for selecting nonfiction trade books and a framework for integrating the use of nonfiction trade books into content area instruction.

Five limitations of content area textbooks:

1. Often written above the level for which they were intended and use abstract, technical vocabulary
2. Often teach children about many topics in a general way with little opportunity for extensive study of a particular subject
3. Often written using an organization and style students do not readily understand (e.g., descriptive mode, lack of transitions)
4. Often unappealing and fail to arouse student interest
5. Often outdated

Five advantages of nonfiction trade books:

1. Enable teachers to more readily individualize content area reading and provide materials that are closer to students' individual reading levels
2. Use features, such as illustrations and graphics, that are more appealing to children

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3. Provide in-depth information on a particular content area topic ranging from people to places to scientific processes

4. Contain information arranged more logically and coherently than in content area textbooks

5. Reflect more current information and are readily accessible to teachers through libraries and other sources

Student Objectives

Students will

- Complete a KWLQ chart
- Listen and respond to a story (narrative text) by participating in a class discussion
- Access a website about the animal in the story to gather facts (expository text)
- Write a report
- Compare and contrast narrative and expository text

Resources

- List of Literature Resources
- Stories of Our People on Alaskool
- International Crane Foundation
- Climate Changes in the Arctic: An Interactive Program Linking Scientists With K-12 Students
- Interactive Stapleless Book

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. Visit the online **Resources** listed to become familiar with the material on each site. The website Climate Changes in the Arctic: An Interactive Program Linking Scientists With K-12 Students is particularly useful when preparing to teach this lesson.

2. Although the Internet provides the source for the nonfiction text, gather nonfiction and fiction trade books appropriate for the grade level you are teaching (see List of Literature Resources).

Instruction and Activities

Session 1

1. Have the class make a KWLQ chart about a sandhill crane and fill in the first two columns for pre-assessment.

    - **K column**: What do we know about the topic?

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- **W column**: What do we want to know about the topic?

2. Have students access the website Stories of Our People on Alaskool to listen to John Active tell a Yu'pik tale about the crane. Instruct students to click on the link "Crane and His Blue Eyes" to hear the story.

3. Discuss the story with students using the following questions:

   - Who is the main character?
   - What is the setting?
   - What is the problem?
   - How is the problem solved?
   - What would you have said to crane?
   - If you were crane what would you have done?
   - Why do you think this story was told?
   - What did you learn about cranes?

Session 2

1. Have students access the International Crane Foundation and click on "Kids," then on "Crane Species" on the left. Invite students to read about specific cranes, such as the sandhill crane or another crane that is found near the students' geographic area, if appropriate. Larger pictures can be found by scrolling down to the bottom of the page, just above the "back to the top" button, and clicking the text that says, "Click here to view the chapter on ."

2. Allow students to explore the various types of cranes, and then ask them to select one specific crane and write a report. The report should include a description of the crane, including body type, food, habitat, coloring, and migration habits.

3. Students can type their reports using the interactive Stapleless Book and include drawings of the crane as well. [As an extension, students can present their reports to the class.]

Session 3

1. Listen to the story "Crane and His Blue Eyes" again and engage students in a discussion using some of the questions from Session 1.

2. Explain to students that they will be debating the benefits of narrative text versus expository text. Divide the class into two groups by having students sign up for either type of text. Each group should prepare for the debate by identifying four benefits of the particular type of text they are supporting and also create a poster illustrating the benefits. Some sample questions to assist students in developing their argument include:

   - What do you like about narrative or expository text?
   - What type of text is easier to remember? Why?
   - What type of text provides more in-depth information?
   - How are narrative and expository texts different?

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3. Each group takes a turn presenting their argument and poster. After listening to the presentation, the other group can ask at least three questions to initiate further discussion and debate.

4. After each group has given their presentation and answered at least three questions, instruct students to summarize why both types of text are important. Students should use a word processing program to type their final summary.

5. Have the class complete the KWLQ chart as a postassessment by filling in the L and Q columns of the chart.

    - **L column**: What did we learn?
    - **Q column**: What other questions do we still have and where can we find answers?

Extensions

- Distribute the directions for Making a Model of a Sandhill Crane. Help students follow the directions to make their own crane puppet. They can use the puppet when presenting their crane reports to the class (see Session 2).
- Invite older students to work with younger students to create a dramatization of the story "Crane and His Blue Eyes." The dramatization should also introduce facts about the crane.
- Have students access the website Stories of Our People on Alaskool and listen to the stories "Tundra Mouse" and "Mink and Raven," also told by John Active. After listening to the stories, invite students to access Arctic Wildlife Portfolio and Tundra to find facts about the animals in each story. Encourage students to compare and contrast what they learned about the animal after listening to the story and what they learned after reading the expository text.
- Have students use the interactive Stapleless Book to make a book about six Arctic animals (one animal per page) by writing a description and drawing a picture of each one. They should be encouraged to use information from the stories they have listened to and the various websites that include factual information about Arctic animals.
- Instruct students to write their own nonfiction story about the sandhill crane using facts that they find on the Internet:

    * Sandhill Crane
    * International Crane Foundation
    * Whooping Crane

Student Assessment/Reflections

- Students complete the KWLQ chart and record their additional questions about cranes and possible sources to find answers.
- Students use the interactive Stapleless Book to write and illustrate a report about cranes.
- Students demonstrate their understanding of the differences between narrative and expository text during a presentation and debate, and summarize the benefits of reading both types of texts.

IRA/NCTE Standards

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1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2 - Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

7 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

9 - Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

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